

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

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FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2339
INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L JIDDA 4356

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, PGOV, PK
SUBJECT: ISLAMIC LAW IN PAKISTAN

1. EMBASSY OFFICER HAS DISCUSSED WITH SENIOR PAKISTAN EMBASSY OFFICIAL SAUDI PRESS AGENCY STORY APPEARING IN JUNE 10 ARAB NEWS THAT GENERAL ZIA AL-HAQQ CONFERRED THURSDAY, JUNE 8, WITH SAUDI AMBASSADOR TO PAKISTAN SHAIKH RIAD AL-KHATIB ABOUT APPLICATION OF ISLAMIC LAW (SHARI'A) IN PAKISTAN.

2. ACCORDING TO PRESS ACCOUNT, ZIA IS EXPECTED TO INTRODUCE A NUMBER OF SHARI'A I-BASED MEASURES THIS MONTH. HE WAS QUOTED AS SAYING THAT PAKISTAN CONSIDERED SAUDI ARABIA AND ITS LEADERSHIP AS SOURCE OF GUIDANCE. LATER THAT SAME DAY, AMBASSADOR RIAD AT RECEPTION IN RAWALPINDI PRAISED PAKISTAN FOR ITS FIRM ADHERENCE TO ISLAMIC LAW, MUSLIM VALUES AND SPIRIT OF JIHAD.

3. PAKISTAN EMBASSY OFFICIAL REACTED VERY NEGATIVELY TO THIS ACCOUNT. HE NOTED THAT MUCH OF SUPPORT BEHIND PRESENT DRIVE FOR IMPLEMENTATING ISLAMIC LAW IN PAKISTAN COMES FROM CONSERVATIVE RELIGIOUS LEADERS WHO DO NOT UNDERSTAND SPIRIT OF SHARI'A AND THINK THAT ENFORCING IT MEANS CHOPPING OFF HANDS. HE NOTED THAT EVERYONE IN PAKISTAN SUPPORTS ISLAMIC LAW AND THAT PAKISTAN'S CONSTITUTION REQUIRES THAT ALL LEGISLATION
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CONFORM TO THE SHARI'A AND PROVIDES FOR A COUNCIL OF RELIGIOUS JUDGES AND SCHOLARS TO ENSURE SUCH CONFORMITY.

4. HE SAID THAT MOST EDUCATED PAKISTANIS ARE DISTRESSED BY PRESENT TENDENCY TO EQUATE SHARI'A WITH SAUDI PRACTICE AND THAT THEY SUPPORTED A MORE LIBERAL AND BROAD-MINDED APPLICATION OF ISLAMIC LAW SUCH AS ADVOCATED BY MOHAMMAD

ALI JINNAH. THIS GROUP FEELS THAT TRUE ISLAMIC SPIRIT
REQUIRES THAT A THEIF MUST HAVE HAD OPPORTUNITY TO EARN
HONORABLE LIVING BEFORE APPLICATION OF STRICT PENALTY
DEPRIVES HIM OF THAT OPPORTUNITY.

5. COMMENT: SAUDIS HAVE FOLLOWED ISLAMIC TRENDS IN
PAKISTAN WITH GREAT INTEREST AND WOULD UNDOUBTEDLY
LIKE TO SEE PAKISTAN CONFORM MORE TO WAHHABI IDEALS OF
JUSTICE AND GOVERNMENT. HOW FAR THE SAUDIS WILL GO IN
ENCOURAGING THIS TREND IS AN OPEN QUESTION. IF ASKED,
THEY WILL SAY THAT THIS IS INTERNAL PAKISTANI MATTER, AND
ALL THEY WILL DO IS OFFER ADVICE IF REQUESTED.
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